

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 IO-13 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /090 W

-----101620 041355Z /53

P R 041212Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7437

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1865

E.O. 11652/ GDS

TAGS: PINT, MARR, PTOV, PERP, LE, IS

SUBJ: MARONITE VIEWS ON SOUTH LEBANON CRISIS- BACHIR GEMAYEL

1. SUMMARY. BACHIR GEMAYEL, LEBANESE FRONT UNIFIED MILITIA COMMANDER, DOES NOT SEEM INCLINED TO TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SITUATION CREATED BY ISRAELI INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON TO TAKE ON SYRIANS OR THE PALESTINIANS. HE BELIEVES UNIFIL WILL NOT SUCCEED; NOR WILL LEBANESE ARMY SUCCEED IN DEPLOYING SOUTH. END SUMMARY

2. EMBOFF CALLED ON BACHIR GEMAYEL AT PHALANGE PARTY HEAD-QUARTERS APRIL 3. HE APPEARED RELAXED, EVEN DISPASSIONATE, AND ASSURED THAT RECENT EVENTS HAD DEMONSTRATED THE CORRECTNESS OF MANY OF HIS VIEWS.

3. BACHIR TOOK A COMPLETELY NEGATIVE VIEW OF THE ISRAELI INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON AS HE HAD EARLIER (BEIRUT 1625) IT HAD DONE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO HELP SOLVE LEBANON'S PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. THE ISRAELIS HAD KILLED ONLY A HANDFUL OF PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS AND THE PLO ORGANIZATION WAS INTACT. THE PROBLEM HAD MERELY BEEN BROUGHT CLOSER TO BEIRUT.  
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4. BACHIR WAS CERTAIN THAT THE UNITED NATIONS INTERVENTION FORCE WOULD NOT SUCCEED IN ITS MISSION. HOW COULD A MIXED FOREIGN FORCE ASSURE LEBANESE NATIONAL RIGHTS, WHE THE LEBANESE ARMY ITSELF COULD OR WOULD NOT? ON THE OTHER HAND, THE LEBANESE ARMY, IF PROPERLY LED, COULD DO THE JOB. BACHIR SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT A LEADER SUCH AS COLONEL TANNOUS

(A RIGHTIST MARONITE OFFICER REMOVED FROM OFFICE BY GENERAL KHOURY AFTER THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS THREE WEEKS AGO) COULD DO THE JOB WITH A SMALL NUMBER OF TROOPS, PERHAPS JUST A BATTALION OF 400.

5. MAJOR HADDAD, LEADER OF THE CHRISTIAN FORCES ALONG THE ISRAELI BORDER, HAD "DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR," BACHIR SAID. HADDAD'S RECENT PROCLAMATION OF A NEW LEBANESE ARMY WAS ABOUT AS REALISTIC AS HIS CALL FOR A NEW LEBANESE REPUBLIC SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. HADDAD, BACHIR SAID, WAS COMPLETELY CONTROLLED BY THE ISRAELIS, AND HIS ACTIONS COULD ONLY BE JUDGED IN THOSE TERMS.

6. THE CHOUF SITUATION WAS QUITE, BUT POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS. SOME PALESTINIANS FROM THE SOUTH HAD BEGUN TO APPEAR IN SUNNI MOSLEM VILLAGES (BUT NOT IN DRUZE OR CHRISTIAN AREAS). BACHIR HAD HEARD THAT WALID JUNBLATT WAS EXTREMELY WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBLE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT INTO DRUZE VILLAGES.

7. BACHIR SAID THAT THE SYRIAN ARMY IN AND AROUND BEIRUT HAD "LEARNED A LESSON" FROM THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS. (SEE ALSO BEIRUT 1564). THE SYRIANS WERE NO LONGER TRYING TO BE LEBANESE POLICEMEN. THEY HAD WITHDRAWN AND CONCENTRATED THEMSELVES IN FEWER BUT STRONGER POSITIONS. THIS WAS AS IT SHOULD BE. (BY IMPLICATION, HE NO LONGER HELD THE SAME GRIEVANCES HE DID AGAINST THE SYRIANS JUST TWO MONTHS AGO.)  
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8. BACHIR SAID THAT NOW, MORE THAN EVER, LEBANON'S MOSLEMS REALIZED THAT THE PALESTINIANS WERE THEIR ENIMIES, NOT THEIR FRIENDS. HE SAID HE AND A GROUP OF OTHER PHALANGE PARTY MEMBERS HAD BEEN HAVING REGULAR MEETINGS WITH A GROUP OF YOUNGER SUNNIS, AND HE APPEARED HOPEFUL THAT SOME KIND OF NEW "STREET LEVEL" POLITICAL ENTENTE MIGHT BECOME POSSIBLE. ASKED, HOWEVER, WHO WERE THE YOUNGER SUNNI LEADERS, HE ONLY MENTIONED LAWYER ABDUL HAMID AHDAD. (THE SAME NAME HE HAD MENTIONED SEVERAL TIMES IN RECENT MONTHS, AS A MOSLEM WHO HELD CORRECT, PATRIOTIC LEBANESE VIEWS.) AS BACHIR SAW IT, REAL LEBANESE NATIONAL POLITICAL RECONCILIATION COULD TAKE PLACE AT THIS LEVEL; IT WOULD NEVER TAKE PLACE AMONG THE OLDER POLITICIANS OR UNDER GOVERNMENT AUSPICES: "PIERRE GEMAYEL CAN EMBRACE SAEB SALAAM ALL DAY; IT WON'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE." THE SARKIS-BOUTROS-HOSS GOVERNMENT WAS INCAPABLE OF LEADING THE POLITICAL FORCES IN THE COUNTRY ANYWHERE.

9. AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INCOMPETENCE, BACHIR SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT IT WAS PRESENTLY CONSIDERING

A PLAN TO REVISE THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO GIVE THE PALESTINIANS FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND OPERATION IN DAMOUR, TO REPLACE WHAT THEY HAD LOST IN SOUTH LEBANON. IN SHORT, THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT WILLING OR ABLE TO APPROACH THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AT ALL. RATHER, DAMOUR SHOULD BE LIBERATED FROM THE PALESTINIANS; PERHAPS SOMEDAY A COMBINED LEBANESE CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM FORCE WOULD ACTUALLY DO SO.

10. COMMENT: BACHIR IS AS NEGATIVE ABOUT THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT AS EVER, SEEING HIS EARLIER CRITICISMS CONFIRMED BY RECENT EVENTS. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, HIS VIEWS ABOUT OTHER FORCES IN THE AREA HAVE SHIFTED: HE APPEARS TO NO LONGER PERCEIVE ISRAEL AS A STRATEGIC ALLY TO THE SOUTH WHOSE SUPPORT CAN BE ENLISTED TO SERVE MARONITE POLITICAL AIMS, AND IS CONFIDENTIAL

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DISILLUSIONED WITH MAJOR HADDAD. NOR DOES HE CONTINUE TO SEE SYRIA AS THE IMPLACABLE FOE OF THOSE INTERESTS. IT MAY BE THAT MORE REASONABLE VOICES IN THE PHALANGE AND ELSEWHERE HAVE HAD SOME IMPACT IN RECENT WEEKS ON HIS THINKING. PARKER

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## Message Attributes

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